UCR | Human Resources

Resource Guide:
Creating Cover Letters

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What is a Cover Letter?

A cover letter is a necessary companion to your résumé. It is a one page advertisement used to catch the attention of employers and encourage them to read your résumé. With a growingly competitive job market a cover letter helps busy employers decide which résumés are worth their time to review. Candidates often spend hours working on their résumé but the cover letter is just as important given that it's received on top of your résumé. Your cover letter should enhance your qualifications and compliment your résumé—**NOT** simply restate your résumé in prose form. You should write a separate cover letter for every job you apply to.

Writing Your Cover Letter

A cover letter gives you more of an opportunity to let your personality show. However, it is still important to keep the information relevant to the job. Here are some simple guidelines to follow:

- Focus on the employer, not yourself. Write about what you will bring to their organization, not what you seek to get from the employer.
- Provide a positive slant to your background and experience, never confess to shortcomings.
- Use an active rather than passive voice and try not to overuse the word "I."
- Incorporate specific wording from the job description as well as any research you've done on the company into your letter.
- Use the same font, style, and even paper (if making a hard copy) as your résumé when formatting your letter.
- Keep it short; brevity is the key to a successful cover letter.

Addressing Your Letter

It is always best to address your letter directly to an individual–avoiding "To Whom it May Concern." If this information is not included in the job posting it can often be found by going online to the company's website or by calling the company directly. If you are unable to determine a specific person, consider addressing it to a position title or to the search committee. Do not address a specific person if you are not sure they are the correct person to be addressing.

Introductory Paragraph

The opening paragraph and opening sentence is always the most difficult, you want it to remain professional but not stuffy or boring. You want to explain why you are writing this letter but also catch your reader's attention. First you should state your purpose:

- Identify the position (and position number, if applicable) for which you are applying.
- Indicate how and where you learned of the opening in the organization whether by personal referral (give person's name), publication, or employment website.

Examples:

- Your advertisement on LinkedIn indicated you are seeking…
- I am applying for…
- Dr. Evans informed me about the opening…
- Dr. Evans recommended I get in touch about the…

Middle Paragraph

Persuade the employer you are worth an interview by explaining how your skills fit the position. You want your cover letter to say, "I am what you are looking for and this is why." Show that your educational and work experience are a good match to the needs of the position and organization, and consider using bullet points to draw attention to specific qualifications and experiences. Remember to highlight your strengths providing specific examples to back up these qualifications and indicate how you intend to help the employer and contribute to their organization. Remember you want to explain why you are particularly interested in the position or company rather than simply restate information from your résumé.

Final Paragraph

To end your cover letter, thank your reader for their time and consideration. Refer them to your enclosed résumé or other application materials. Be sure to open a line of communication by indicating your willingness to answer further questions or provide additional information, and let the employer know when and where you can be contacted. If the company is not located nearby mention when you will be in the area, and depending on how comfortable you are you may suggest setting up an interview or further contact. Do not assume an employer will contact you when they receive your cover letter and résumé. It is your responsibility is to follow up!

Sample Management Cover Letter

Name
Address
City, State, Zip Code
Phone Number
Cell Phone Number
Email

Date

Dear Mr./Ms. LastName

I am applying for the Inside Sales position posted on Boston.Monster.com. At your convenience, I'd appreciate the opportunity to discuss the position and my candidacy with you. You can find my resume attached to this e-mail.

I am looking to bring my well-honed public relations, marketing, and client-focused online, oral, and interpersonal communication skills internally to succeed in an inside sales position.

Pertinent experience and skills for the posted position include:

*The power of persuasion. I've pitched stories for C-level executives via phone and e-mail and placed them in major media outlets, such as MSNBC, CIO Magazine, Sirius Satellite Radio, MSN Money, AARP Bulletin, and The New York Daily News.

*The ability to reach key audiences. As a journalist, I published stories in key print and online media, including CareerJournal.com, CollegeJournal.com and StartupJournal.com (online publications of The Wall Street Journal), Consumers Digest, Woman's Day, and ePregnancy Magazine. As a copywriter, my work has been used in e-mail marketing, online and offline advertisements, blogs, brochures, taglines, and Web sites.

*Strong financial aptitude. My experience includes a little over a decade in the accounting profession in external and internal client-facing environments.

*B.S. in Accounting from Southern New Hampshire University, with a Minor in Management Information Systems.

*Relevant computer skills (Microsoft products, HTML, etc.).

*Good listener...Solid work ethic...Desire to excel...Meet deadlines...Enjoy a fast-paced environment...Extraordinary factual recall...

I'd love to find out more about the position you're looking to fill, and I would welcome the opportunity to tell you how my skills and ideas can benefit Wellesley Information Services. I can be reached at (555) 555-5555 or name@gmail.com.

Thanks for your consideration; I look forward to hearing from you soon!

Sincerely,

Your Signature

Your Typed Name

Sample Programmer Cover Letter

Richard Anderson
1234, West 67 Street
Carlisle, MA 01741
(123)-456 7890

Date: 1st May, 2005

Mr. John Smith
National Infosystems
257, Park Avenue South
New York, NY 12345-6789

Dear Mr. Smith,

I am writing to introduce myself to you as a student of International School of Technology (ISTech.). I'm responding to your advertisement in the local Employment News for want of a software developer for your development section.

As you can see in the enclosed resume, I have a very strong academic background in operating systems combined with over five years research experience in search engine optimization. My recent internship at Major Infosystems, New York, allowed me to further develop and strengthen my technical skills. I have good hands-on experience programming languages like C, C++, Java and Assembly. I believe that I could make a significant and valuable contribution in your firm.

I would appreciate the opportunity to discuss how my education and experience will be helpful to you. I will be contacting you tomorrow morning on phone to talk about the possibility of arranging an interview. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Richard Anderson
Senior Student, Computer Engg.
ISTech, Manhattan

Sample Targeted Cover Letter

Your Name
Your Address
Your City, State, Zip Code
Your Phone Number
Your Email

Date

Dear Mr./Ms. Last Name:

I am interested in the Coordinator position advertised on XYZ. My resume is enclosed for your review. Given my related experience and excellent capabilities I would appreciate your consideration for this job opening. My skills are an ideal match for this position.

Your Requirements:

- Responsible for evening operations in Student Center and other facilities, including managing registration, solving customer problems, dealing with risk management and emergencies, enforcement of department policies.
- Assists with hiring, training, and management of staff. Coordinate statistics and inventory.
- Experience in the supervision of student staff and strong interpersonal skills are also preferred.
- Valid Minnesota driver's license with good driving record. Ability to travel to different sites required.
- Experience in collegiate programming and management.

My Qualifications:

- Register students for courses, design and manage program software, solve customer problems, enforce department policies, and serve as a contact for students, faculty, and staff.
- Hiring, training, scheduling and management of staff, managing supply inventory, and ordering.
- Minnesota driver's license with NTSA defensive driving certification.
- Extensive experience in collegiate programming and management.
- Excellent interpersonal and communication skills.

I appreciate your taking the time to review my credentials and experience. Again, thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Your Signature

Your Typed Name

Sample Transferable Skills Cover Letter

Employer's Name
Company
Address
City, State, Zip

Dear Salutation LastName,

Within three short years, I have developed strong sales skills that have enabled me to build a record of sustained sales increases. I thrive on challenge and change, and I look forward to new opportunities to build positive customer relationships every day.

I believe that as a Sales Representative for [Company], my energy, analytic skills, organizational abilities, and creativity in tackling problems will make a positive contribution. I am equally comfortable working independently to meet company goals, as well as collaboratively as part of a team. I have always been able to establish and maintain excellent relationships with clients and coworkers at all levels. My professional skills include:

- Uncovering client needs and recommending appropriate products or services.
- Selling solutions to customers and then backing up those sales with top-quality service.
- Building relationships with coworkers, clients, and strategic partners.
- Developing processes and strategies to increase referrals and revenue.
- Accurately completing data research and analysis while demonstrating computer proficiency.

I would welcome the chance to provide you with additional information to supplement what appears in my enclosed resume. I am available for a personal interview at your convenience. I know you are busy, and have many applications to review, so please let me know if you wish to further discuss your requirements and my ability to meet them.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Your Name